Annual Meeting of the United States–México Border Health Commission

El Paso, Texas
July 19-20, 2010

SUMMARY


During the meeting both Secretaries led the discussion on BHC reports that included advances to the border health research agenda; the progress of Healthy Border 2010 and the development of Healthy Border 2020; and the presentation of the BHC’s 10-Year Anniversary Report.

Each Secretary also held separate meetings with their respective Sections members and delegates to discuss priorities for the border region, BHC activity updates, and 2010-2011 work plans.

The meeting concluded with both Secretaries signing the Joint Declaration between the U.S. and Mexican governments (Joint Declaration between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of the United Mexican States in Relation to the United States-México Border Health Commission) reaffirming the establishment of the Commission.

The 2010 Annual Meeting also marked the celebration of the 10th Anniversary of the BHC with over 200 participants were in attendance.

Priority Committee Meeting

Dr. Larry Kline, California-U.S. Section Member, and Dr. Abelardo García Cantú (delegate for Dr. Jesús Zacarías Villarreal, Nuevo León-México Section Member) co-chaired the meeting.

Dan Reyna, General Manager for the BHC-U.S. Section, provided an overview and update on changes to the BHC bylaws based on the newly approved committee restructuring that allows for three operational committees: Planning, Program, and Budget. These committees evolve through a Coordinating Committee which facilitates communication between all committees and each BHC Section.

Following D. Reyna, Dr. Kline provided an overview of the Committee Operational Guidelines that included a presentation on the priority setting process and structure of each committee.

The meeting concluded with D. Reyna providing an overview of the proposed changes to the Joint Declaration between the U.S. and Mexican governments. Changes included extending the BHC deadline for state activity annual reporting from the first of February to the first of October and modifications to operational procedures that included adopting a majority rule for decision making only after first seeking consensus among BHC members.
**Program Committee Meeting**

Emma Torres, Arizona-U.S. Section Member, and Dr. Juan Guillermo Miguel Mansur, Tamaulipas-México Section Member, co-chaired the meeting.

D. Reyna and Dr. María Teresa Zorrilla, Executive Secretary, BHC-México Section, provided an overview of the 2010-2011 work plan, to include timeline, structure, and processes per the *BHC Border Health Improvement Initiative* (i.e., Cooperative Agreement with the U.S. border states).

Other updates included the following for 2009-2010: National Infant Immunization Week by Liz Castro, New Mexico Outreach Office Coordinator, and Dr. Elisa Aguilar, Chihuahua Outreach Office Coordinator; Border Binational Health Week by Robert Guerrero (delegate for Will Humble), Arizona-U.S. Section, and Dr. Jorge Sebastián Hernández, Tamaulipas Outreach Office Coordinator; and BHC reports and publications by Linda Willer, Communications Director, BHC-U.S. Section.

Dr. Aguilar reported on the outcomes of the Second Annual Binational Health Councils’ Strategic Planning Workshop and was followed by R. Guerrero who provided updates to the *2010 Border Governors’ Health Work Table Proclamation* which included the recommendation that the BHC annually convene a U.S.-México Border Obesity Summit.

**Business Session**

Dr. Nils Daulaire, Director, Office of Global Health Affairs (delegate for U.S. Secretary Sebelius), and Dr. María de los Ángeles Fromow, Secretary Córdova’s Senior Advisor/Liaison for Social Participation, Mexican Secretariat of Health (delegate for México Secretary Córdova), co-chaired the meeting.

A posthumous acknowledgment of service for Dr. Rodolfo Torre Cantú, former Secretary of Health of Tamaulipas, was given by Dr. Juan Guillermo Miguel Mansur, Secretary of Health of Tamaulipas, on behalf of the BHC. Dr. Cantú served on the BHC for five years.

The session included other report updates as follows: the U.S.-México Tuberculosis (TB) Consortium that took place June 17, 2010, in San Diego, California, provided by Mauricio Leiva, Chief, California Office of Binational Border Health (delegate for Mark Horton), and Dr. Abelardo García Cantú, Nuevo León Secretariat of Health. The purpose of this meeting was to enhance the integration of binational and borderwide efforts among the ten border states with both government and private partners on mutual binational TB issues. The meeting resulted in over 50 participants.

Dr. Ronald J. Dutton, Director, Texas Office of Border Health (delegate for Dr. David Lakey), reported on the Border Binational Infectious Disease (BBID) Conference held June 28-30, 2010, in San Antonio, Texas. The purpose of this conference was to address binational aspects and the impact of infectious disease surveillance in both countries, document common infectious disease issues and seek best solutions, and respond to recommendations approved at the XXVII Border Governors Conference (Monterrey, 2009). Dr. Dutton reported over 135 participants in attendance from the United States, México, and Canada. The BBID Conference resulted in the following next steps for BHC action: 1) establish and convene workgroups to develop protocols to implement the
Guidelines for U.S.-México Coordination on Epidemiological Events of Mutual Interest; 2) urge continued funding of Early Warning Infectious Disease Surveillance (EWIDS) and border infectious disease surveillance to help implement the World Health Organization’s International Health Regulations, the Guidelines, the agreements from the North American Leaders Summit, and the national health security strategies of the United States and México; and 3) convene the 2011 Border Binational Infectious Disease Conference.

The discussion followed with P. Dulin, Director, New Mexico Office of Border Health (delegate for Alfredo Vigil), and Dr. Jorge Sebastián Hernández, who provided an update on the TB Border Models of Excellence, an initiative that recognized successful and/or promising models of effective TB surveillance, control, education, prevention, and case management in the U.S.-México border region.

P. Dulin identified the following awardees from the border models of excellence in TB along the U.S.-México border: TBNet, directed by the Migrant Clinicians Network; Los dos Laredos Binational TB Program, directed by the City of Laredo Health Department and Los Dos Laredos Binational Health Council; and Autonomous University of Tamaulipas School of Medicine, Student Participation in the Fight against TB (Participación de los Estudiantes de la Facultad de Medicina de la Universidad Autónoma de Tamaulipas, en la lucha contra la Tuberculosis). These programs will be featured in the 2010 Border Models of Excellence in Tuberculosis Compendium that will be published by the BHC at a later date.

Veronica Barajas, California Outreach Office Coordinator, and Dr. Aguilar reported on the border models of excellence initiative in childhood obesity that likewise recognizes community-based programs and initiatives in the border region that have made great strides in improving the health and well-being in childhood obesity through education, prevention, and services. Two awardees were selected: the Brownsville Farmer’s Market, directed by the Brownsville-Matamoros Binational Health Council, and the Nutrition Education Aimed at Toddlers and Animal Trackers program for ages 2-4 (NEAT AT2), directed by the University of California-San Diego Department of Pediatrics. These programs will be featured in the 2010 Border Models of Excellence in Childhood Obesity Compendium that will be published by the BHC at a later date.

R. Guerrero and Dr. Gudelia Rangel, State Coordinator, Baja California Outreach Office, presented on the new Leaders across Borders program, an advanced leadership training program designed for public health and health care professionals working to improve community health across and along the border region established in 2009, and reported on the first cohort consisting of nine participants from the United States and nine from México representing eight border states. The next iteration of Leaders across Borders is scheduled to begin in January 2011.

The meeting continued with the following business session reports, BHC committee reports, and action items: Priority Setting Committee updates on behalf of Dr. Kline and Dr. Jesús Zacarías Villarreal (Co-Chairs); Program Committee updates on behalf of Emma Torres and Dr. Juan Guillermo M. Mansur (Co-Chairs); approval of the Joint Declaration of the Binational Agreement announcement; and approval of the updated bylaws.
Following the public comment opportunity session, Dr. Daulaire and Dr. Fromow adjourned the meeting.

**U.S.-México Border Health Commission Plenary Session**

Providing opening remarks were Congressman Silvestre Reyes (TX) and Ciudad Juárez Mayor José Reyes Ferriz. The BHC was also honored with two taped video presentations given by Senator Jeff Bingaman (NM) and Congressman Raul Grijalva (AZ) congratulating the BHC on its work along the U.S.-México border.

U.S. Secretary Sebelius and México Secretary Córdova led the discussion on BHC reports that included the following updates on joint accomplishments:

*Border Health Research Agenda* – Dr. J. Manuel de la Rosa, Texas-U.S. Section Member, and Dr. Dora Elia Cortés, Nuevo León-México Section Member, presented on advances toward developing a border health research agenda which included the completion of the BHC report *Researching Border Health: A Review of Initiatives to Develop a Border Health Research Agenda*. This report examines previous efforts from border health experts to develop a border health research agenda and identifies implementation strategies of such an agenda. Other advances toward this goal included a draft white paper, *Institutional Review Boards in the U.S.-México Border: Current Protocols and Practices*, that examines the institutional review board (IRB) process in the United States and México for the intended purpose of establishing a binational IRB process.


*10-Year Anniversary Report of the BHC* – Dr. Antonio Falcon, Texas-U.S. Section Member, and Dr. José Guadalupe Bustamante, Baja California-México Section Member, provided an overview of BHC key achievements over the past decade from the newly released *United States-México Border Health Commission 10-Year Anniversary Report* that included the following BHC initiatives: establishment of BHC outreach offices in each of the ten U.S.-México border states in 2000; Border Binational Health Week and the annual border region National Infant Immunization Week which has brought together hundreds of partners that have to date provided health promotion, information, and direct services to over 1.2 million residents in the border region from 2004 to the present; the establishment of the U.S.-México Border TB Consortium to enhance binational and borderwide efforts on mutual TB issues; and the U.S.-México binational infectious disease initiative to document the critical infectious disease issues impacting the border region. Other achievements included the 2003 *Ventanillas de Salud* Pilot Project in three Mexican consulates along the border that focused on providing information and referral services, sponsored by the BHC, which have to
date been expanded by the Mexican Ministry of Foreign Affairs to 40 Mexican consulates in the United States, and the establishment of the EWIDS project designed to improve the ability to rapidly detect, identify, and report infectious disease outbreaks and potential bioterrorism agents.

Border Health Status Report, United States and México – Dr. Bruce San Filippo, New Mexico-U.S. Section Member, and Dr. Rangel provided updates on the border health status reports for their respective countries. Dr. San Filippo provided an overview of key health indicators and objectives covered in the U.S. Status Report Border Lives: Health Status in the United States-México Border Region and briefed on key findings and conclusions as follows: 1) a critical need exists for increased surveillance of communicable diseases and environmental factors; 2) a lack of health facilities exists in the workforce and poor access to services exists in the U.S. border region; 3) the population is disproportionately affected by diabetes, cervical cancer, tuberculosis, and unintentional injuries.

Dr. Rangel provided an overview of the México border status report, Condiciones de Salud en la Frontera Norte de México (Health Conditions along México’s Northern Border), that identifies the most pressing problems facing the Northern México border; public policy priorities on specific subjects such as obesity, HIV/AIDS, drug consumption, and health promotion among others; and recommendations for the México border region.

Actions and Next Steps

- Document other obtained resources for the BHC and report on efforts to secure future funding.
- Promote successful and innovative projects to be replicated in other border communities.
- Focus on environmental emergencies along the border region and address those issues (e.g., support the transportation of materials and resources across the border during emergencies.
- Review research studies in areas such as TB and HIV.
- Publish research of effective programs along the border.
- Present successful projects during the annual meeting.
- Continue addressing the childhood obesity epidemic
- Research successful childhood obesity prevention programs and host an annual Childhood Obesity Borderwide Summit.